

**Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen**  
**Statement**  
**Hearing on “Striking the Appropriate Balance: The Defense Department’s**  
**Expanding Role in Foreign Assistance”**  
**Wednesday, March 18, 2009**

There have been successes in international assistance efforts over the past half-century.

The “Green Revolution” significantly increased food production.

Ongoing efforts have raised child survival rates around the world and survival and prevention of HIV-AIDS is on the rise.

We have helped develop and strengthen independent civil society and fostered market-based economies in emerging democracies.

Nevertheless, I think that many would agree that the results of decades of foreign aid --- provided not just by the United States, but by European states, the UN’s development agencies and the World Bank and regional development banks --- have been disappointing.

In many areas of the world, we wonder why the significant aid provided has not produced the outcome we all want --- stable, secure, free, and prosperous states.

Analysts and policymakers refer to “failed” or “failing” states or, in some instances, “countries in conflict” or “at risk of” falling into conflict-- all despite our past and continuing assistance to them.

In conflict situations, we must give our military the tools it needs to help win the support of local populations and fight threats to U.S. national security.

I also support the military in providing urgent humanitarian aid and in providing assistance to our allies to help fight international narco-trafficking and global Islamist militants.

However, providing the Defense Department with more of a role in providing assistance for the development of impoverished countries raises concerns.

It is not because it might prove difficult to coordinate aid provided by our military with aid provided by our civilian agencies.

If the underlying concepts and approaches for development assistance are faulty, and the strategy is based on archaic models, then the Defense Department may prove no more successful at achieving long-term development goals than our civilian agencies have been.

I am therefore not sure that proposals put forth such as creating a new aid program for reconstruction and stabilization or those calling for more personnel and a significant increase in funding, will prove more productive.

Some of the programs being implemented by the State Department's new Reconstruction and Stabilization office, look a lot like the kinds of programs that AID has had in place and that the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement has already implemented for many years.

We should also recall that not just the United States but many other donor countries and agencies have contributed major amounts of assistance over the decades with mixed results.

Providing more funds and more staff may produce some marginal improvements in the immediate-term, but it is questionable whether this would ensure long-term, sustainable progress, in light of the results of the past 50 years.

We understand the desire by the State Department and AID to reclaim their dominance and counter the growing engagement of the Defense Department in providing assistance.

But we should not rush to judgment on such proposals.

We first need a careful assessment of our performance in the last five decades, of our current programs and structures, and work toward substantive comprehensive reform of our general personnel and procurement systems.

The majority of our aid programs are operating on the basis of a post World War II approach and concepts that have their roots in the 1950s.

If we want to successfully help others, then such concepts need to be updated.

Flawed assumptions about how to promote the “development” of impoverished countries need to be addressed.

Otherwise, we may find that we will continue to provide significant taxpayer funds, while the impoverished states we seek to aid continue to “fail” --- regardless of which of our agencies we use to provide that assistance.

I hope that our witnesses today will take a moment to consider that overriding question, while they provide us with their views on the proper role of the military in providing assistance overseas.